

### **Editors letter**

Welcome to our first e-newsletter from joint editors Pat Brown and Myra Poole. It has been decided to send out occasional e-newsletters. The members of the National Committee (Nat Cog.) are aware that electronic mail, in this ecological age, is the future of any organisation that hopes to be in continual communication with its members. So we welcome your remarks on this our first effort. We suggest that you can run this e-newsletter off to share with non CWO friends or email it to them. You may also wish to send it to your parish priest and local Bishop.

*There will still be a newsletter sent by post in June.*

### **News Headlines**

Congress on Women – Rome Feb. 2008  
This congress is to commemorate Mulieris Dignitatem.

<http://www.womenpriests.org/church/mulieris.asp>

Our comments will be taken to this congress. They are summarised on the next page.

WOW, Women's Ordination Worldwide Steering Group – April 3 – 6 St Katherine's, Butchers Row, London

**Synod of Bishops – Rome October 2008 – Australian petition for change in the church - more news soon**

### **Next Nat Cog**

London 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2008

### **Annual Gathering October 2007**

This was held at St Andrews, Waterloo, an Anglican Church very near to Waterloo Station and the Young Vic Theatre, making it easier for everyone to get to.

There were 25 plus in attendance, nowhere near as many people as we hoped would come. Perhaps we may do better next year. The morning was taken up with business, who would volunteer for the next Nat Cog,, reports from local groups, Leeds, London, Liverpool and Edinburgh, WOW business and the timing of future meetings for the Nat Cog to make it more convenient for all to attend. Reference was made to the above headlines and all were thanked for their work for CWO.

The development of a future handbook for Nat Cog is now under discussion as this group evolves and changes.

The Rev Robert Kaggwa, principal RC chaplain at The University of Roehampton, spoke in the afternoon on the topic 'Young People and the Church'. This provoked lively discussion on why young people are turned off religion at this age and the importance of using new technology such as 'facebook' to contact the younger generation. After the meeting we retired to The Young Vic for refreshments and thanks. The speaker and further events are to be discussed at the next Nat Cog on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2008.

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS ON MULIERIS DIGNITATEM (1988)  
JANUARY 2008

On positive side: The document is a break through in several aspects:-

there is understanding of historical conditioning

there is a call for 'real equality in every area' and a condemnation of the exploitation of women.

However, this understanding is not applied to church: 'women are equal but special' but not 'icons of Christ'! In paragraph six there is praise for women who have fought for women's rights in the face of criticism but the church is not applying this principle to itself.

1. Use of 'man' as a generic term and then 'men and women' as specific terms, in the English translation, muddles the whole document and makes it ungrammatical and confusing. One member sums up this document as personifying 'the male gaze' syndrome. Note: p. 92 par.8 'He writes that the Eucharist expresses the relationship between man and woman: throughout the document there is a conflict between bridal imagery and the ideas of the equality of men and women as images of God. Basically the Pope's ideas of the creation of human beings and hence his interpretation of bridal imagery are scientifically extremely outdated. They date back to a time when scientifically it was believed that all power of creation came from the man's seed and the woman's womb was an empty vacuum to receive this life-giving seed. These views have been handed down theologically and philosophically from Aristotle and Greek philosophy, continued through the early fathers of the church and Thomas Aquinas etc. right through to the present papacy.
2. In the whole exposition of womanhood, the document fails to recognise that the masculine and feminine are not two distinct realities but socially contrived meanings.
3. The Icon image is cemented in this document as the so-called basic theology for male priesthood but it is a natural corollary of all the previous points in the document i.e. that woman represents 'humanity' and man 'divinity'.

Suggested ways forward:

- Women are well able to speak for themselves and a new document on women should be commissioned written by women scholars world wide. However, Pope and advisors would have to accept document !!!! Could be an official and unofficial publication!

- Any official document of church should also have a substantial number of theological, scriptural, philosophical, sociological women advisors from all over the world.

- These women should not just be 'papal' appointments.

(Mulieris Dignitatem continued)

Interesting Individual points raised:

Why is Mary, who is not God, seen as the model for consecrated women, instead of Christ, who is God? Does this not place women again, at a remove from the divine.

Why can women only be icons of humanity and not of Christ who reconciled God and humanity? Is this not illogical?

Why is the nature of women to be found in 'signs', which seem to be plucked from the air, and from Aristotle with a heavy reliance on spousal texts to the exclusion of other scriptural texts?

These thoughts are John Paul II's reflections

The whole document is excessively long and convoluted

The argument depends on a fairly literal understanding on Genesis I, II, III

When it gets to the subject of virginity, it betrays a totally male perspective

Human sexuality exists on a spectrum: we are all a wonderful mixture of the masculine and the feminine, to say nothing of course of those who are attracted to members of their own sex.

\*\*Thanks to Myra Poole for collating all the individual and group responses.

LATE NEWS

**NEW CWO WEBSITE!!** PLEASE PAY IT A VISIT [www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk](http://www.catholic-womens-ordination.org.uk)

Please send comments to the website email address on the contacts page

*CWO Annual Gathering*

This will be held in Merseyside and organised by their recently formed CWO group.

The date for your diary is Saturday 11 October. *Write it in now!*

More details later